



## Mains Marathon 2024

**Day 23:** NATO's actions have exacerbated geopolitical tensions rather than fostering security. Critically examine. (250 words)

02 Aug 2024 | GS Paper 2 | International Relations

### Approach / Explanation / Answer

#### Approach

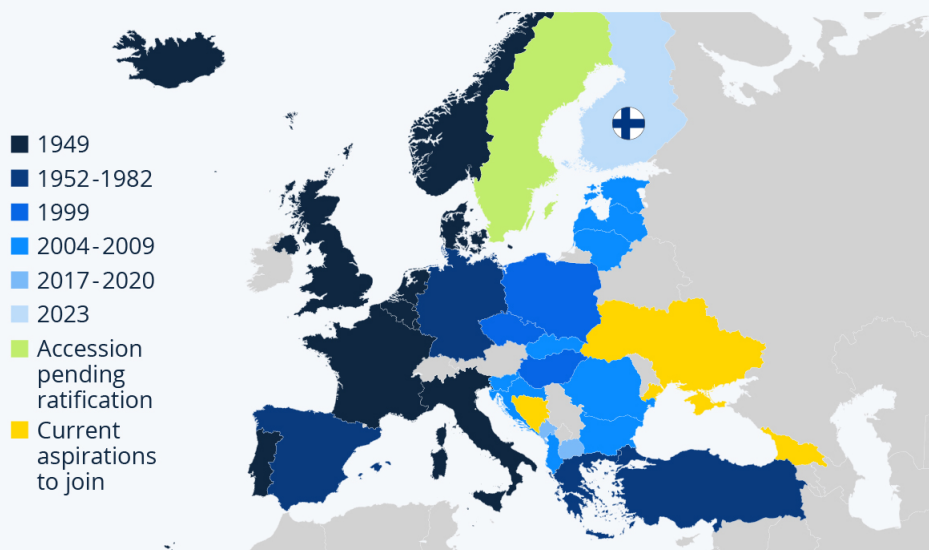
- Briefly introduce the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and its primary objectives.
- Discuss NATO's actions that led to increased geopolitical tensions
- Present arguments supporting NATO's actions as necessary for ensuring collective security
- Suggest reforms required to make NATO more effective.
- Conclude Suitably.

#### Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an intergovernmental military alliance formed in 1949. It was established with the primary goal of providing collective defense against potential aggression, particularly from the Soviet Union during the Cold War era. Over the years, NATO has evolved to address a range of security challenges beyond its original mandate.

# Finland Becomes 31st Member of NATO

European countries by year they joined NATO



Map excludes the United States and Canada, both founding members of NATO.

## Body

### **NATO's actions have exacerbated geopolitical tensions :**

#### ▪ **Unrestrained Aggression:**

- NATO was created to defend its member states from aggression. As the facts go, it never suffered from one or the threat of one. On the contrary, in the name of defending its member states, NATO went on the offensive.
- Over the last seven decades, it initiated or participated in more than 200 military conflicts worldwide, including 20 major ones.

#### ▪ **Misadventures in Eastern European, Middle East and Asian Countries:**

- The bombing of Yugoslavia, the invasion of Iraq, the ruined statehood of Libya, the unlawful military interference in Syria and the dubious results of combating terrorism in Afghanistan are the most prominent among numerous cases in point.

#### ▪ **Provoking Russia-Ukraine War:**

- Five waves of the alliance's expansion since 1991 despite assurances about the contrary and the transformation of Ukraine into the springboard against Russia have become the greatest provocation of all time.
- The alliance dismantled dialogue mechanisms with Russia and adopted the Strategic Concept at the 2022 NATO summit in Madrid by which Moscow is proclaimed to be the most significant and direct threat to allied security, peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic, which Russia has never been.

#### ▪ **Maintaining Western Hegemony:**

- It has been argued that NATO, while proclaiming its peaceful aspirations, go in for war or threaten to attack any state that refuses to accept the decadent liberal "rules-based order".
  - In this sense, NATO's military potential stands as an effective tool for maintaining the West's hegemony over the nations that are not viewed as a military menace.
- This sets a notion of NATO being a continuation of colonial practices in a modern form under the slogans of democracy, human rights and freedom as prescribed by the Euro-Atlantic rulers.

#### ▪ **Unwarranted Expansion:**

- The coalition's capabilities are being built up in outer- and cyberspace. NATO's "eastern flank" is pumped with new assets and forces to gear up for the adjusted regional military

plans. NATO's aggressive behaviour expands beyond Russia. The search is on for new partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

- Despite supposed verbal promises to Russia that it would not expand to the east, NATO has admitted several former Warsaw Pact members since the fall of the Soviet Union.
- Now, with NATO members bordering Russia and the promise of further expansion, Russia feels increasingly threatened. The possibility of Ukraine joining NATO has been cited as a significant reason for Russian actions in the Russia-Ukraine Conflict.

▪ **Capitalising the Threat Posed in The Indo-Pacific:**

- A new manifestation of the block's expansionism can be seen in NATO's attempts to extend its responsibility over the entire eastern hemisphere under the slogan of indivisibility of security in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions.
- To this end, the US has been busy creating pocket minilateral formats, such as AUKUS, US-Japan-South Korea troika, and the Tokyo-Seoul-Canberra-Wellington quartet to drag them into practical cooperation with NATO.

**The NATO Grouping has Fostered Security:**

▪ **The Cold War:**

- During the Cold War, NATO's efforts were centred around three goals: controlling the Soviet Union, dissuading militant nationalism and communism across Europe, and establishing greater European political unity.
- The alliance played a major role in maintaining the tense peace of the Cold War and ensuring the war remained 'cold'. With the end of the war, NATO worked to further maintain peace.
- They established the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and, in 1997, NATO encouraged bilateral discussion between the US and Russia through the Founding Act.

▪ **Modern Day Protection:**

- Today, NATO continues to provide a level of protection for its members. Since its founding, a NATO member has only been attacked and evoked Article 5 once (the US after 9/11).
- Member countries are afforded collective security, just as NATO originally sought to do. Additionally, NATO has created a global network of more than 40 non-member countries and other partners around the globe - ranging from the African Union to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).
- This network provides NATO support in its crisis management operations, ranging from aid operations such as its delivery of relief supplies after the 2005 Kashmir Earthquake to counter-terrorism operations in the Mediterranean and the coast of Somalia.

▪ **Providing Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine:**

- NATO has publicly denounced the Russian invasion of Ukraine and NATO member countries and allies have provided substantial aid to Ukraine. The US has contributed roughly USD 54 billion to Ukraine.
- Other countries have provided humanitarian aid and support for the more than 5 million refugees of the war. The Ukraine war has reaffirmed the importance of NATO, and even spurred Finland and Sweden to increase their efforts to join the alliance.

**Reforms Required to Make NATO More Effective :**

▪ **The Quality, Coherence and Timelines of Advice:**

- Enhance the importance and functions of the five main policy committees within NATO, including the Military Committee, Political Committee, Policy Coordination Group, Executive Working Group, and Senior Resource Board.
- Improve coordination among these committees, aligning their agendas with the Council's priorities. This will help translate the Council's guidance into effective and timely advice for both military and civilian NATO bodies.

▪ **NATO's Non-Military Dimension:**

- Ensure that, when the allies decide to engage the Alliance operationally, it benefits from the civil expertise at the political level and capacity on the ground necessary to complete its mandate successfully, in concert with other international organisations and local actors; this may require the creation of a civil security committee or an analogous structure.

▪ **Organisational Cohesion and Internal Synergy:**

- Orient not only NATO headquarters but a streamlined set of NATO bodies in and outside of Brussels, to deliver against a rolling set of strategic-level priorities, to enhance transparency, visibility and commonality of purpose across the Alliance.
- **An Inclusive and United Alliance:**
  - Institutional arrangements should mirror the inseparability of Alliance security, aiming to uphold and reinforce allied unity and cohesion, and foster a shared sense of purpose.
    - Therefore, NATO structures and procedures must primarily unite the interests, concerns, political will, and military capabilities of all allies, enabling the consensus-building and collective actions.
  - Wherever possible, structures and procedures should encourage and facilitate political dialogue, consultation, combined planning, training, exercising and operations between the allies and an increasing number of non-NATO nations.
- **The Alliance Must Remain Distinct:**
  - While NATO should actively integrate with other international organisations to address complex crises through a Comprehensive Approach, this should not diminish its core strength of combining robust military capabilities with nuanced strategies.
- **Focus on Non-Traditional Threats:**
  - While territorial defence remains a core task, many argue NATO must further adapt to address non-traditional threats like terrorism, cyber attacks, disinformation campaigns, and threats to supply chain security.

## Conclusion

As NATO celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024, the alliance stands at a crucial juncture in its storied history. NATO has successfully upheld its core mission of safeguarding the freedom and security of its members through a rules-based international order. However, the past decades have borne witness to a rapidly evolving global security landscape characterised by the resurgence of great power rivalries, transnational threats, and complex modern challenges. To remain an effective bulwark of peace and stability, NATO must continue to adapt and reform itself through greater investment in defence capabilities, streamlined decision-making processes, and a broadened focus on emerging arenas like cyber, space, and technological superiority.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/mains-marathon-daily-answer-writing-practice/papers/main-s-marathon-2024/nato-s-actions-have-exacerbated-geopolitical-tensions-rather-than-fostering-security/print>